SUFFOLK NANSEMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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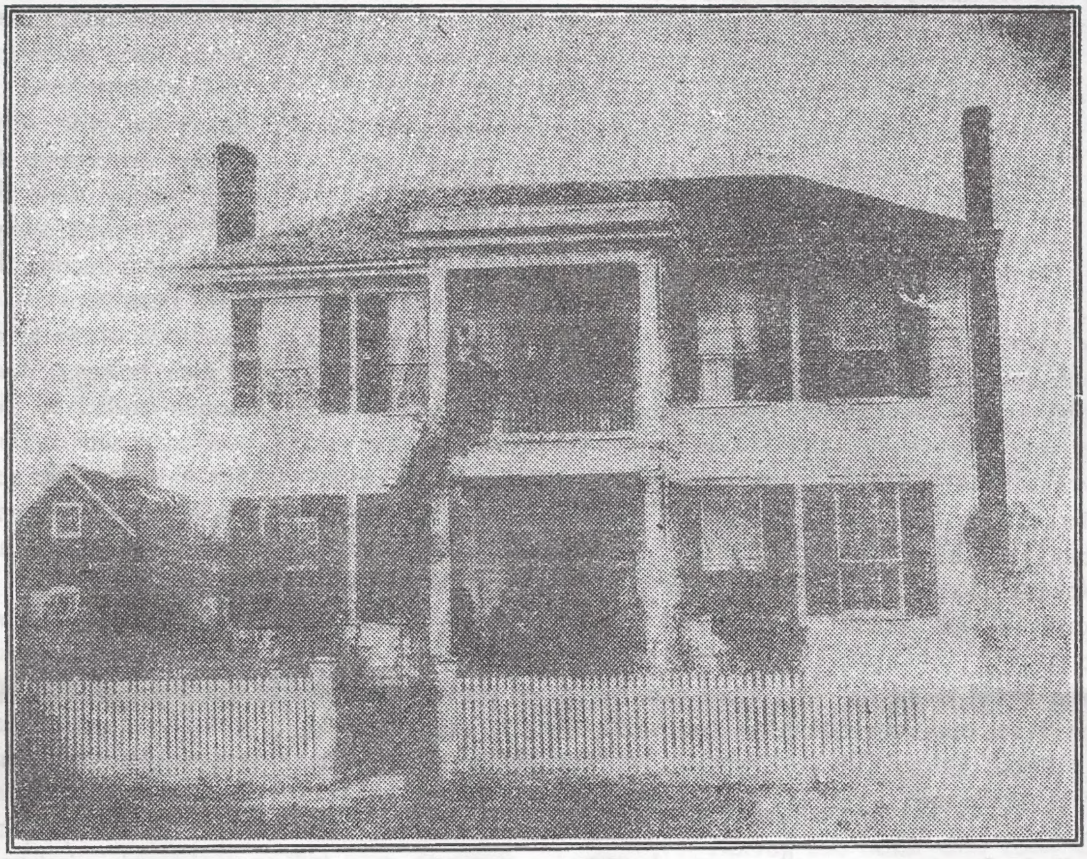


Hall Place

Secesh House to Circus Camp to Friendly Neighborhood

Henry Riddick (1797-1875) must not have meant to lead a quiet life. He was born on a farm near Sunbury, North Carolina, but as a very young man came to Suffolk to seek his fortune. For a while he was engaged in the mercantile business. By 1825 he was operating the Lafayette Hotel (a most appropriate name, as Lafayette visited Suffolk that year).

According to Fillmore Norfleet's Suffolk in Virginia (which is based on Reminiscences of Suffolk by Henry's brother, James Andrew Riddick), Riddick and his in-laws had an enclave of homes and businesses at the upper end of Main Street. The Lafayette Hotel was a large, three story brick building more or less where the new courts buildings is today. That would have been near the southern edge of the town of Suffolk. Most activity was still centered around the river in 1825. Main Street was the main street – few others existed yet.

Fillmore Norfleet's footnotes on Reminiscences of Suffolk cite several examples of situations in which this "somewhat volatile man" found himself. In the 1820's, one of his neighbors brought suit against him for trespass and slander and sometime in that decade he was stabbed in an argument that started over a card game. In 1825, according to Norfleet, Henry Riddick paid twenty dollars to Joseph Prentis for advice about a contested tavern license and about dueling.

Not about to take life passively, Henry Riddick was, not surprisingly, a "staunch and firey Confederate" when the Civil War started. And when the Union Army took Suffolk, his house was known as the Secesh (Secessionist) House, one of a few privately owned homes shown on the map of Suffolk drawn by a Union soldier in 1863.

- See map on next page

The house, built perhaps c. 1830, faced Main Street at its southern end, just across the Norfolk and Western railroad tracks. In fact, the Norfolk and Western passenger station was just across the tracks from the house (the station that we see today just off East Washington Street was built around 1911). The lane leading from the front gate became Riddick Street, now known as South Main. Whether Henry Riddick and his wife Mary (Brewer) built the house is not known, nor do we know how long they lived there. She died in 1871 and he in 1875.

The next owner of the house was Joseph Patton Hall (see related article, this issue). How many years the Halls lived in the house and how much land they had, this reporter cannot say. By 1907 the first block of Cedar Street had been developed. Soon after that the Hall house (former Secesh House) was reportedly moved from the head of Main Street to the corner of Cedar Street and Johnson Avenue where it stands today. The neighborhood that developed between Cedar Street and the extended South Main Street was originally and is again called Hall Place.

When Miss Virginia Brinkley and her family moved to her grand-parents' home at 310 Cedar Street, sometime after 1918, their house was the last one in the neighborhood. There was a woods beyond that where she remembers a circus troop camping. The Brinkleys were given circus passes because they let the circus water its animals – including elephants – from their outside faucet.

In the 1920's and 30's numerous other houses were built on Cedar and South Main and they came together at the southern end forming sort of an oval. Viola Rawls (Rollings) moved with her family to 223 Cedar Street as a child. She grew up and married a Hall Place boy, J.S. Rollings, (224 Cedar St.) and they built a house on a lot near her parents' home (309 Cedar Street.) Miss Brinkley and Mrs. Rollings recall a friendly neighborhood of beautifully kept owner-occupied houses with tidy lawns and crepe myrtles and other beautiful trees lining the streets. The ladies remember the Truitt sisters down on the corner who had such a beautiful house and gave a nice Christmas party each year. And there was Mr. King whose overall factory made uniforms during World War I. Mr. Walton had a fine car and a chauffer. And then there was Dr. Holland, the dentist who was a clown.

Miss Brinkley, a popular teacher at Suffolk High School for many years, never learned to drive because she didn't need to. She walked to school as a child and to work as an adult. Until about twenty-five years ago every item one might require for normal life (school, church, groceries, doctors, medicine, furniture, clothing, appliances, and movies) was in walking distance of Hall Place. The churches are still nearby and so is Joseph P. Hall Drug Store.

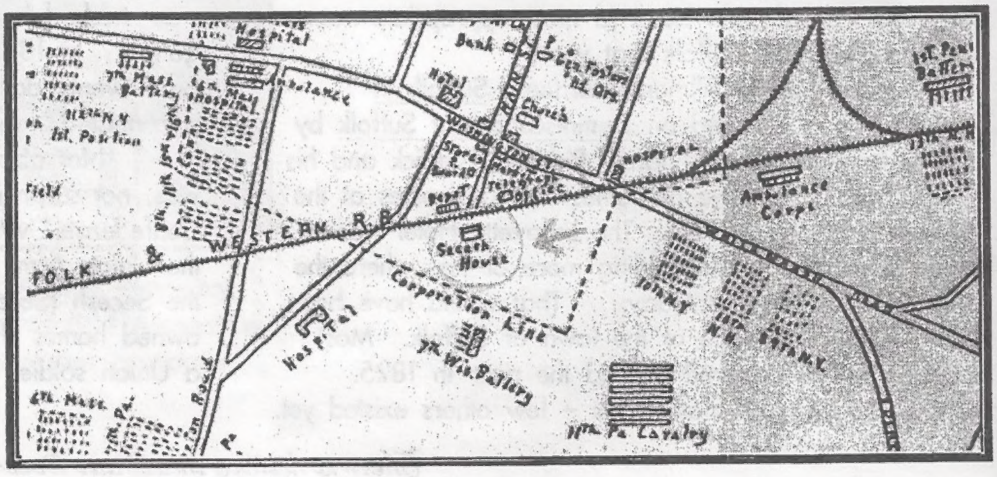
Neighbors for more than fifty years, Mrs. Rollings and Miss Brinkley have seen happy times and in recent years, some unfortunate changes in their neighborhood. Early in its history the area was affected by the peanut warehouses that Mr. Obici built nearby. Over the years, residents died or moved away. In many cases in the last decade the former owners have been replaced by absentee landlords whose tenants take no pride in their homes. The Hall Place Civic league started by Wendy Hill is waging a war against apathy which has threatened to completely destroy the nice old neighborhood.

Hall Place is fighting for its life. A refurbished park was dedicated last summer on the spot where the old Secesh house stood. It was the first project out of the Hall Place Iniatives, a plan put together by the neighborhood and endorsed by City Council.

Other projects are being considered including landscaping and streetscaping improvements on Hall Avenue which runs along the Norfolk and Western tracks, and is named for the second residents of the Secesh house. *

- Sue F. Woodward

A Massachusetts soldier who came to Suffolk in 1862 wrote "I did not think that a week [from the time he left home] would find me away down in the heart of Secessia but here I am in Suffolk only ten miles from the North Carolina line." From The Diary of Solomon Augustus Lenfest. In "Secessia"(Suffolk) the Secesh house is noted (circle and arrow by us) on a map of Suffolk done by Union soldier, 1863. Map From SUFFOLK: A Pictorial History by Kermit Hobbs and William A. Paquette



Hall's is Oldest Business with Same Name

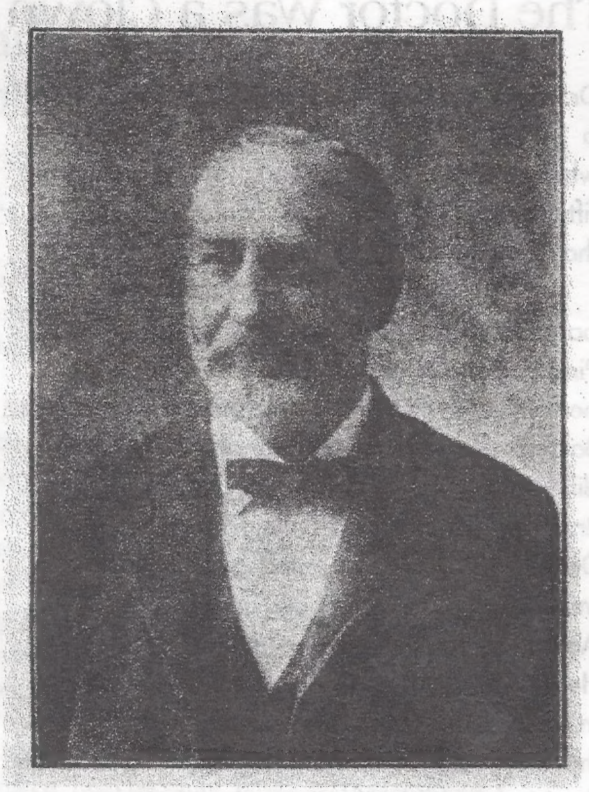
In 1837, the year of the Great Fire in the old part of town (near the river), Joseph Patton Hall (1809-1889) started a new business – a drug store – at the other end of town. Sometime before the War Between the States Mr. Hall moved the store to the Square (the first block of West Washington Street) and, except for a few years on Saratoga Street, that is where it has been since then.

Joseph P. Hall, jr. took over the business in 1889 when his father died and operated it until his own death in 1918. J. Braxton Hill must have been the next owner. In 1935 he sold the business to Jesse Harrell and Anderson Maxey. Floyd Bennett and Shirley Baumgardner bought the store in 1969. Miss Baumgardner owns it today. No doubt the founder would be surprised that his name has been used for well over a hundred years. Even more surprising for him would be that the owner/pharmacist is a female!

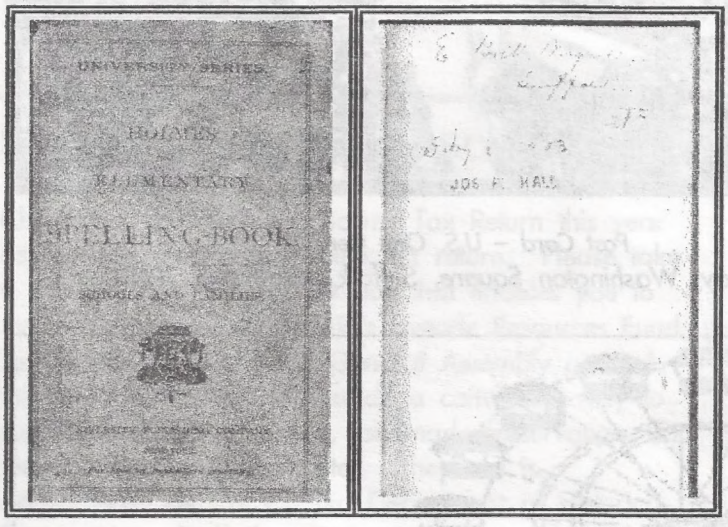
The store has always offered patent medicines as well as prescription ones. In its early years Joseph P. Hall's offered glassware, crockery, paints, and oils. Around the turn of the last century Suffolk students bought textbooks there. Lucien Pruden was pharmacist there for more than forty years starting in 1901. In an oral history done in the 1960's for SNHS the late R. L. Woodward (1888-1975) tells of collecting old salmon bricks to sell to Mr. Lucien Pruden. Mr. Pruden ground them for silver polish to be sold in the store. Today the store sells a variety of merhcandise along with the patent and prescription medicines. If you live in town, they still offer delivery service.

A special edition of the Suffolk News Herald in 1942 listed the following employees at that time: druggists – Lucien D. Pruden, Roland Wright, and W. Taylor Johnson; buyer and assistant manager – Emmet White; truss expert – Richard Solomon; clerks – W. S. Riddick, Mrs. Olive DeArmond, Miss Ruth Byrd, and Miss Frances Baines. The cashiers were Miss Sarah Doughtie, Miss Rachel Rogers, and Miss Virginia Jones and the bookkeeper was Mrs. Ethel Phillips Lewin. The delivery boys were Bobbie Barlow, Leslie Nelms, Willie Butler, Leroy Staton, Harvey Lee Baker and Louis Gates. *

– *Thanks to Shirley Baumgardner and A Century of Pharmacy in Virginia*



Joseph P. Hall



An old spelling textbook sold by Hall's – dated 1903, owned by E. Britt Myrick with Joseph P. Hall's stamp on the inside cover.

JOSEPH P. HALL
Drugs, Seeds and Stationery, No. 17 Washington Square – P. O. Box 55, Suffolk, VA

The Doctor Was a Clown

Dr. Linwood Carr Holland (1882-1955) was a Suffolk native (and a Hall Place resident) who practiced dentistry here for more than fifty years. Dr. Holland's prime hobby, though, was clowning.

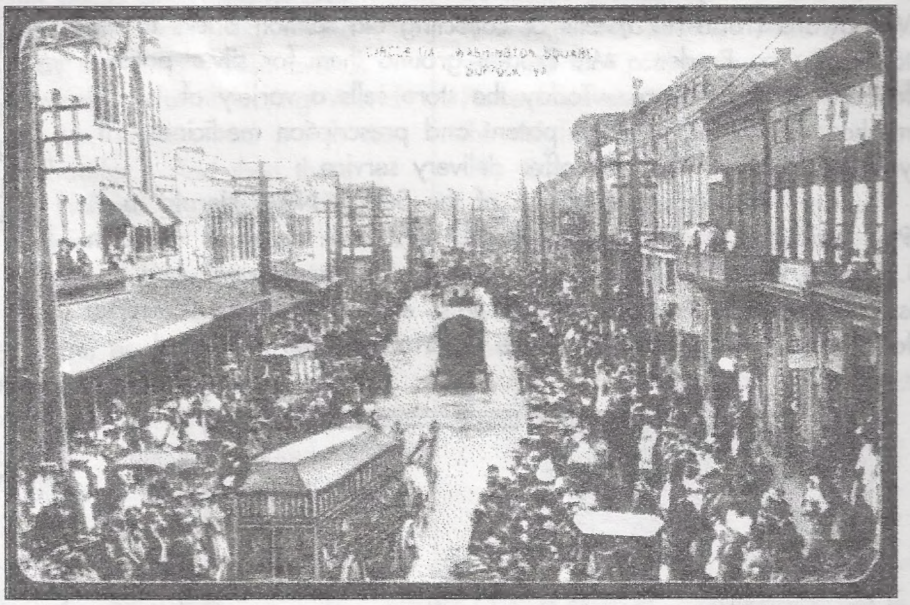
For twenty-five years he appeared in parades and in circuses, often with his duck, Pink Lemonade, as a guest clown. He performed in Richmond, Washington, Baltimore, and Norfolk with over a dozen different circuses from the largest (Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey) to the smallest. Dr. Holland even appeared briefly in the movie "The Greatest Show on Earth." According to his obituary in the Suffolk News Herald (9/20/55), Dr. Holland built his home in Hall Place, 201 Cedar Street, in 1910 so that he could watch traveling shows unload on the Norfolk and Western railroad tracks a short distance away. *

Here is Dr. L.C. Holland, left, at his favorite pastime, taken in Washington, D.C., when he was guest clown with Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey, May 25, 1942. Right is Dr. Holland as a Dental Surgeon. In a letter to the News-Herald, Dr. Holland said, "It has been forty years since I was photographed except in clown costume, so I hiked to Fred Hamblin, as you ordered, and he 'took me.'

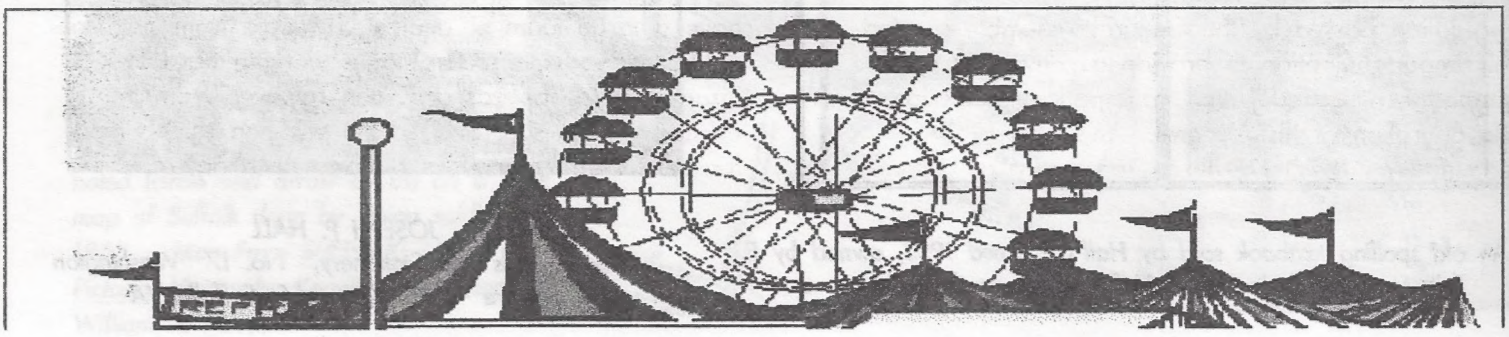
Hot Roasted Peanuts!!!

"For a long time peanuts were considered simple fare. The War Between the States helped change the peanut's status when Union army soldiers found them to their liking and took them home. The call "Hot Roasted Peanuts" was first heard in the late 1800's at P.T. Barnum's circus. Desire for peanuts spread as circus wagons traveled across the country."

- *From a brochure by Virginia Carolina Peanut Promotions*



Post Card – U.S. One Cent
Circus Day, Washington Square, Suffolk, Virginia, c. 1910



Sustaining Communities – News from Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Suffolk Puts CLB Funds to Work This year saw the rejuvenation of Suffolk's Main Street Station. The more than $500,000 rehabilitation of the station, owned by the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society, turned the badly burned station into a museum that may include a visitors' center. The project is a culmination of the years of interest Suffolk has been generating through the department's Certified Local Government (CLG) program. Localities accepted into the federally funded program participate formally in a broad range of preservation programs and are eligible to apply for matching grants. Since 1985, Suffolk has received CLG funding to survey and prepare a national register nomination for its downtown historic district, northern, and southern sections; prepare design guidelines; host a public information session; nominate four additional historic districts; complete an archeological assessment; and create a renovation plan component for its comprehensive plan. In 1997, Suffolk's CLG funds produced a national register nomination to expand the downtown historic district to include more resources.

That made the train station eligible for a $100,000 state matching preservation grant. The station is now protected by a preservation easement. "The train station has fueled the preservation effort and changed the whole look of downtown," said Barbara McPhail, president of the Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society. Three more rehabilitations on Main Street are now underway. * – Katherine Harding.

Support Historic Preservation☑

Check that Box on your Income Tax Return this year as you file your state income tax return. Please take a moment to check off the box that enables you to make a donation to Virginia's Historic Resources Fund. Legislation passed by the General Assembly created this important option to provide a convenient way to support heritage education, landmark preservation, and the operation of historic sites. The fund is administered by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and all donations are fully tax deductible. Deductions can be claimed in the following year. For your support, we thank you! * - Barbara McPhail

Update – Suffolk High School Project

Drawing by Floyd Benton

New Name –
Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts

Mission Statement –
The mission of the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts is to encourage and advocate the visual and performing arts by providing a forum where diverse audiences can actively participate in cultural experiences. The Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts is committed to supporting the economic vitality of greater Suffolk through enhancing the life experiences of our citizens and visitors.

Fund Drive –
The task force has recently hired a professional fundraising group, the Kellogg Organization, Inc. to assist in raising one million dollars by October 15, 2001. This will match the City's public allocation of one million for this year.

Usage –
A) Grand Hall and Ballroom for banquets, receptions, dances, etc.
B) Theater and support areas
C) Support spaces – gift shop, cafe', historical classroom
D) Administration – cultural center
E) Studio spaces and non-profits
F) Center for Seniors
G) Administration – Parks and Recreation Department

Upcoming –
March 7, 2001 – 7:00 p.m. Suffolk Council Meeting – a presentation of the project by the City, task force members, and architects Ballou, Justic and Upton.

May 13-19 – Historic Preservation Week. The theme for 2001 is "Restore, Renew, Rediscover Your Historic Neighborhood Schools!"

What an exciting project for Suffolk! We have a large team of dedicated people from both the public and private sector that is working hard to insure that the boards are soon removed from the massive windows of SHS so the sun can shine throughout that marvelous building once again.

Please call me if you have any ideas or questions. *

- Betsy W. Brothers
Chairman, SHS Task Force

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE BECOME DOCENTS, HOSTS AND HOSTESSES, SHOPKEEPERS, AND "ENGINEERS". THEY HAVE MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE AND WE NEED EVEN MORE OF YOU PARTICIPATING. TRAINING IS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST. PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED.

Mary Walsh
Jane Moore
Tommy Arthur
Percy Wilkins
Lou Kalwite
Betty & Henry Odom
Jim & Sallie Caton
Tommy & Marion Hines
Hazel White
Lynn Rose
Tommy & Shirley Underwood
Audrey Grizzle
Lynn Barlow
Marie Baker
Betty Chapman
Bill & Hunter Duggan
Charles & Unity Bailey
Bert & Ann Henderson
Janice & Sid Thomas
Charlotte Mansfield
Elizabeth Gordon
Dick & Sylvia Pond
Linda Consolvo
George Blair
Sue Davis
Natalie Parker
Patrick Evans-Hyton
Sue Burton
Connie & John Taylor
Gloria Byrum
Miley Walker
Jim McLemore
Norm Garner
Sue Woodward
Bill Fay
Eddie Adkins
Marion Friend
Susan Garrett
Phyllis Pruden
Betty Anne Kyle
Pearl Harrell
Tom Pruden
Barbara Rayburn
Betty Ellison
Bert Poulson
Lynette Brugeman
Betsy Brothers
Barbara McPhail

PLEASE CLIP AND RETURN

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

_____ HOST OR HOSTESS

_____ GIFT SHOP

_____ CLEANING AND/OR GARDENING

Remember our Train Station Committee that continues to work hard. This project is still a work in progress and requires that they continue to give their time. Thanks to:

Everett Birdsong
Sue Woodward
Jim McLemore
Percy Wilkins
Betty Ellison
George Consolvo
George Blair
Richard Pond
Mary Walsh
Elizabeth McCoury
Barbara McPhail
Jim Caton
Lynn Rose
Tommy Underwood
Patrick Evans-Hylton
Betsy Brothers
Tom Hines
Pearl Harrell
Greg Rutledge

Notes from Old Nansemond

The Railroad Came Through Town

Holland's Corner was a small settlement at the juncture of the South Quay and Franklin Roads until 1888 when the Atlantic and Danville Railroad came through and commerce began to pick up. Banks, businesses, and houses began to spring up. The town flourished.

This pretty building was used by the Holland Christian Church from 1880 – 1920. It was on the Suffolk Road east of Holland. Around 1920, William Nelson Camp gave land in Holland for a new church. The new structure was built on Holland's Main Street (now known as South Quay Road) and the new building was, and is, much grander than the old one had been.

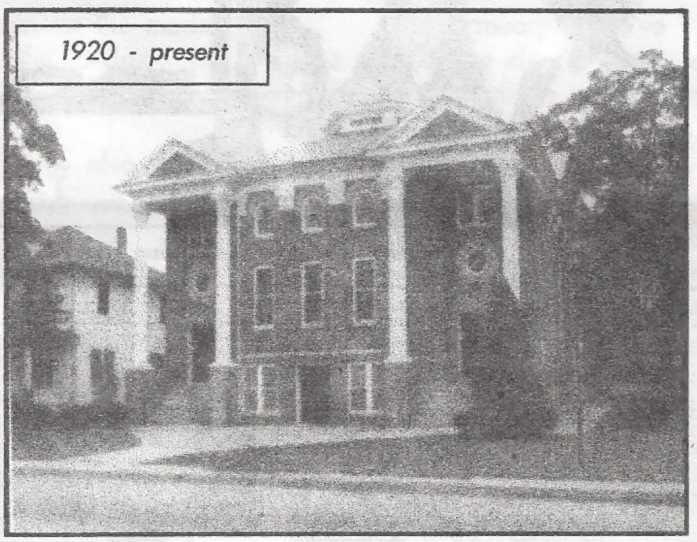
The builder/architect was a man of German descent, Mr. Reidell. His own home was across the street from the church and was a very respectable, pretty middle-class residence. It still stands today at 6736 South Quay Road, somewhat altered from its early days.

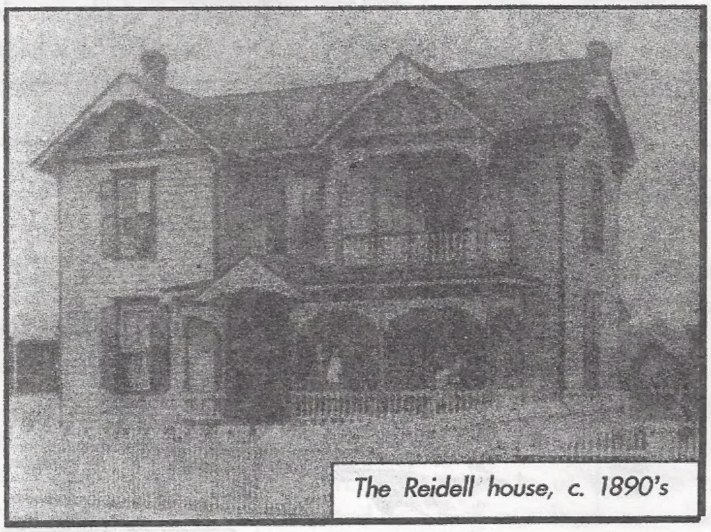
- Thanks To Bobby Jones

The family of the late Senator Richard J. Holland has given SNHS a Suffolk City flag that was in Senator Holland's Richmond office. Senator Holland had more than one connection with Suffolk and old Nansemond County. Aside from representing part of Suffolk in the State Senate, he was married to a Nansemond County girl, (the late) Jean Culpepper Holland. Beyond that Senator Holland's grandfather, E.T. Holland, was from Holland and was first president of the Farmer's Bank of Holland.

The latest issue of *Hampton Roads Monthly Magazine* has an article about the village of Chuckatuck with pictures and information contributed by Lynn Rose. *

Congratulations to **Betsy Brothers~**
Winner of the
Sons of Confederate Veterans
Marion Joyner Watson Award
for 2000!





The Reidell house, c. 1890's

Percy Wilkins

Riddick's Folley

Winter Wonderland

The Tour for 2000 was unusual and, happily, memorable. Rather than opening private homes, this past December we opted to have a little history weekend. We had a different audience and boy! did we have different weather.

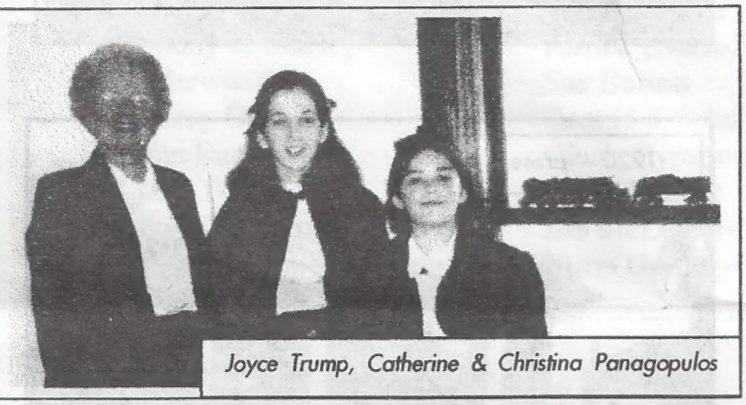
At Riddick's Folly Taylor Hart and Hunt Odom appeared as two of the Riddick children (and the young actors are themselves, Riddick descendants.) At 400 North Main Street (the Wood House) Julianna Riddick Wood appeared in the person of Janice Thomas; Peter Prentis appeared on the street thanks to Doug Naismith with assistance from Mary Jane Naismith; and at the Finney School, was the Finney sisters, spoke thanks to Joyce Trump and Natalie Parker.

The weekend was cold but festive – The Lake Kilby Lakeview Heights and Laurel Garden Clubs decorated at Riddick's Folly and the train station. Susan and Ann Carr decorated at the Wood House (400 North Main), last year's decorator house, where Susan's son Scott has his First Union Securities office. Betsy and Barbara decked the station halls as well.

Saturday was cold but on Sunday we had snow. We faltered for a moment but decided to go on with the show – and people came! Riddick's Folly decided not to open because of the steps and the Wood House only opened for two hours for the same reason. Miss Finny (Joyce Trump) moved to the train station tower – perhaps waiting for some students to arrive on the train. She was joined by two of her young ladies (Catherine and Christina Panagopulos).

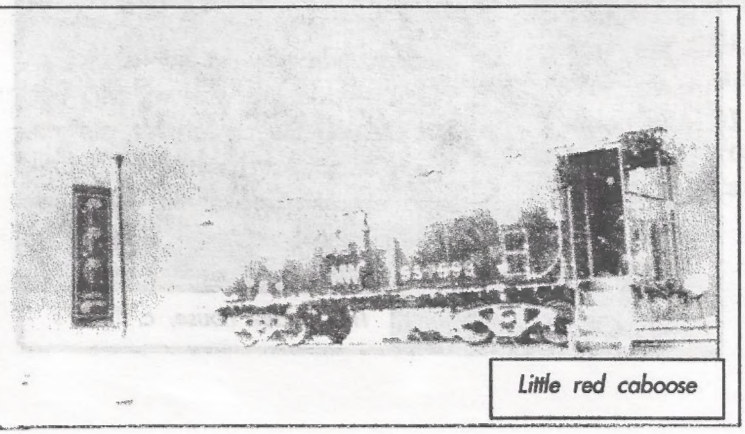
People still wanted to see College Court and the Finney School and we showed them – On Saturday we had enjoyed visits from families who had lived in the Finney apartments forty years ago.

Thank you Barbara, Betsy, Pam, Percy, Tommy, Mike, Lee, Robin, Linda, George, Hunter, Bill, Lynn and all the rest of you who worked to make the little history weekend possible. I wish that all of you could have been with me in the candle lit Finney School parlor as I watched an old student of mine (from thirty years ago) relishing Miss Finney's tales of the old school; and at the end of the day when we sat in the station and watched as, one after another, photographers came – both amateur and professional – to try to capture the absolutely magical scene of the station in the snow. ✳ - SFW



Joyce Trump, Catherine & Christina Panagopulos

Seaboard Train Station



Little red caboose

The Little Station that Could

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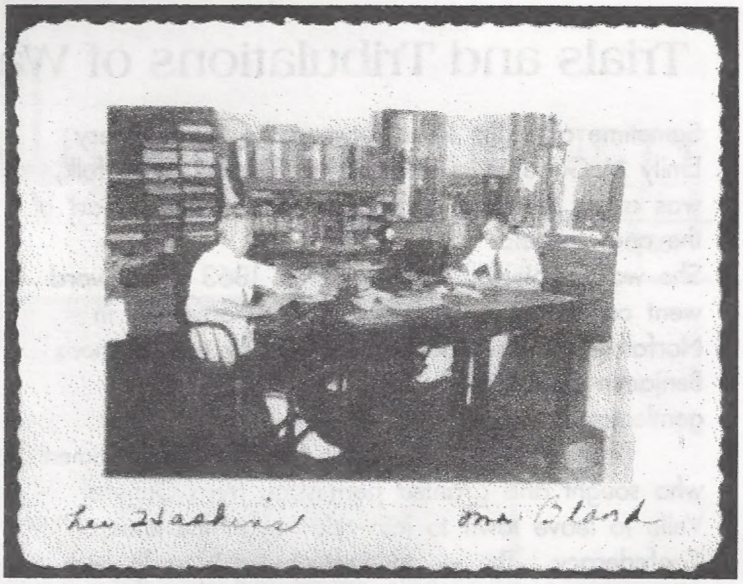
December 3, 2000 – night photo by Tommy Arthur



Seaboard station office c. 1940 – Mr. Lee O. Haskins and Mr. Ossie Bland – Picture courtesy of Annie Trump Haskins

We've had a busy fall and winter at the new station. We opened without a plan for volunteers and without much in the way of exhibits. The model was definitely a work in progress. No train was running on the model on the weekend. We were only open on Sundays.

Somehow we found workers and visitors came and some came again and again. We closed in November to ready ourselves for a Christmas re-opening. Exhibit cases appeared as did exhibits thanks to Lynn Rose and Betsy Brothers. A gift shop was created thanks to Betsy Brothers, Barbara McPhail, Betty Ellison, and Lynn Rose. Local art teacher, John Taylor, provided studio space and supplies for a group of Suffolk artists who painted pictures on old slates from the station roof.

The model men, Tidewater Division National Model Railroad Association, made great strides, especially at the end of the model that shows the river, where Jim McLemore (recently joined by Miley Walker) has installed landscape and houses.

It took a small army to put a skirt on the model – Connie Taylor, Sue Burton, Hazel White, Gloria Byrum, Mary Walsh, and Betsy Brothers and about 90 yards of fabric. Tommy and Percy appeared just when we needed them. They started running a train on the model and it has come to life! Miley Walker is an occasional engineer as well.

Percy and Tommy also adopted the N & W caboose given to us by Mrs. Junie Lancaster. In November they gave it a good washing (Brrr!) and decorated it for Christmas. It was beautiful! Now it's open for our guests every weekend. They hope to paint it when warm weather arrives. We're open Saturdays and Sundays now.

From the start we've enjoyed good attendance. Yes, there's a slow day now and then but we go on being surprised. We regularly have guests (many repeats) from Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach. They come form Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, and Smithfield as well as, of course, Suffolk. Actually we've had guests from every part of Virginia. We have frequent visitors from north-eastern North Carolina as well as occasional guests from other parts of the Tarheel State.

West Virginia, Georgia, Maryland, California, Oregon, Oklahoma, Florida, Wyoming, Washington, Indiana, and Suffolk, England are all represented in our guest book.

Since January 1, we've done tours for a church group, a Norfolk senior citizens group, forty first graders, twenty-four fourth graders, Suffolk Even Start, and Holland Baptist Church. On the whole that's a lot of visitors and a lot of volunteer hours. We hope to keep improving as we go and we'd like to be open more than we are now. About sixteen new volunteers just underwent training and will be starting to go to work. Don't you want to join us? Next training session will be in the next few weeks. Call 923-3899 (the station) and leave a message if you'd like to join us for training. Volunteers keep things going! * - SFW

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of **Floyd R. Benton,** 1926-2000. The Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society would like to acknowledge the work of Mr. Benton. He created the design for our new logo, and was a native of Suffolk who became one of the foremost designers of corporate identity in the southeast. We are grateful for his generous donation to us and we look forward to using our fresh new look for many years to come. *

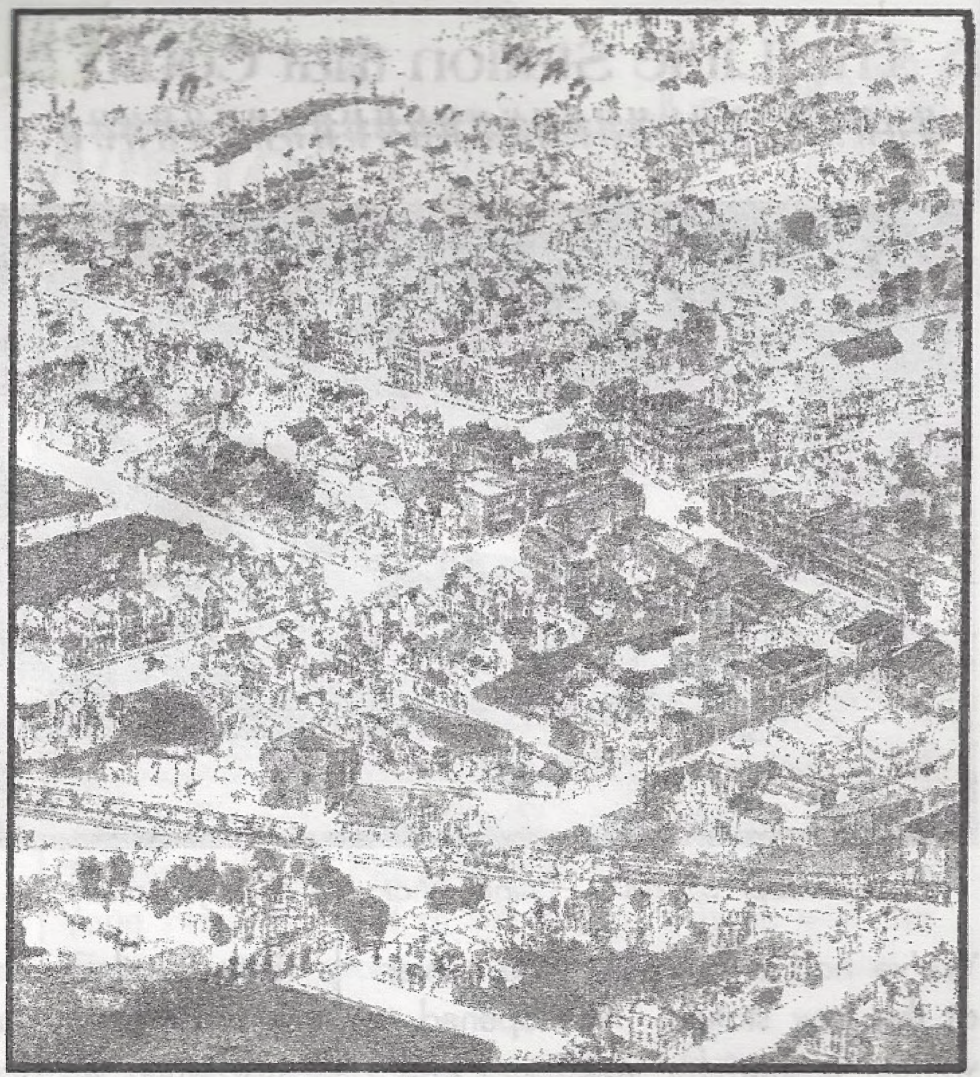
Trials and Tribulations of War

Sometime after the War Between the States, Mary Emily McGuire, a relative of the Riddicks in Suffolk, was asked to tell a story of wartime. This is part of the one she told:

She was in Norfolk in October of 1863 when word went out that General Velie, military governor in Norfolk, was about to be replaced by the infamous Benjamin "Beast" Butler who was – well, not a gentleman.

She was one of about three hundred women who sought and granted permission from General Velie to leave town to join relatives in the lines of Confederacy. The woman left on the Norfolk and Western Railroad. When the train stopped at the depot in Suffolk they saw "two masculine looking Yankee women get off the train escorted by the Guard." They went to Henry Riddick's house (later the Hall Place) and prepared to search all the women for contraband – with good reason one might add.

The story is told in full and in Mary Emily's own words in "The Quiet Regiment" available at the Train Station and at Riddick's Folly.



Detail of "Birds eye view of Suffolk 1907" shows the very beginning of Hall Place with the Hall House still in place.

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Photograph from A Century of Virginia Pharmacy, published by the Virginia Pharmaceutical Association and the VphA Research and Education Foundation